EASTWICK'S
SPEECH ON THE STATE
OF
AFFAIRS IN CENTRAL ASIA

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BOMBAY BRANCH
OF THE
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.
TOWN HALL, BOMBAY.

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SPEECH

OF

EDWARD B. EASTWICK, Esq., M.P.,

DELIVERED IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS, JULY 9, 1869,

ON THE

STATE OF AFFAIRS IN CENTRAL ASIA.

27185

EXTRACTED FROM

"HANSARD'S PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES,"

VOL. CXCVII.

LONDON:

CORNELIUS BUCK, 23, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1869.

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SPEECH.

MR. EASTWICK: Sir, I rise to ask a Question as to the state of affairs in Central Asia, and to the remarkable changes that are going on there; and I wish, before doing so, to explain why I desire to refer to the subject. Some hon. Members may, perhaps, think that at a time when so many home questions of the utmost importance are pressing for decision, the consideration of a question relating to a region so remote and inaccessible, and of which we know so little, as Central Asia, might well be postponed. But I would remind the House that the remoteness of a region, its difficulty of access, and our ignorance concerning it, are no sufficient guarantees that it may not unexpectedly become a grievous burden upon our finances. Witness the case of Abyssinia, of Persia, and of Afghánistan. I believe that had our relations with those countries been brought under the notice of the House at the proper moment, we should never have heard of the Abyssinian, Persian, or Afghán wars, nor have had to lament the enormous expenditure they entailed. In that belief I would ask the House to take up this question of Central Asia in good time; and, in particular, I would ask those hon. Members who expressed such extreme dissatisfaction at the discrepancy between the Estimates for the Abyssinian expedition and the actual outlay to be beforehand with this question, and to take care that there shall never be a necessity for drawing up any Estimates at all regarding it.

Sir, I believe I am right in saying that it was the intention of a late hon. Member of this House—who is, perhaps, better acquainted with the Central Asian question than any other Englishman—I mean the late Member for Frome (Sir Henry Rawlinson)—to have brought the subject under the notice of the House last Session. That intention was frustrated; but I think the very fact that one so conversant with the subject was desirous of bringing it forward, is good evidence that the consideration of it ought not to be deferred now, more particularly as every circumstance, that could have been mentioned then, has acquired increased gravity in the interim. I suppose that Sir Henry Rawlinson's principal motive for wishing to bring the subject forward was that

which also actuates myself—I mean the desire to remove some erroneous impressions on the question, which have been created and disseminated by the public Press. I am not speaking of the Press of this country, though there has been no inconsiderable interest awakened on the subject even here. But I refer chiefly to the Russian Press, and would say of the articles which have appeared on the subject in such papers as the *Moscow Gazette*, using the words of an Edinburgh Review for 1867—

"How many a blunder to Russia no less than to England might be saved, if, on the common ground of Central Asia, the political intentions of either party were more clearly understood by the other."

In India, too, the progress of Russia has become a very absorbing topic, and has given rise to considerable anxiety, and even alarm, which it is very desirable should be dissipated by a full and frank discussion in this House.

I will now hasten to notice, as briefly as possible, the events which have occurred in Central Asia; but I must first define the region of which I wish to speak under that title. I mean by Central Asia, then, that vast region which is conterminous with the northern frontiers of Persia and Afghánistan, is bounded on the west by the Caspian Sea, on the north by the frontiers of the Russian provinces, Orenburg and Omsk, and on the east by the mountains of Chinese Tartary, and the ranges which succeed them, up to Bakhtarminsk. In order to simplify my statement, I shall say what I have to say of Chinese Tartary at once, so as to eliminate that country from the discussion. It has been called little Bokhára, Eastern Turkestan or Chinese Tartary. The second name is that which should now be adopted, since the Russians have established a new province to the west which they have called Turkestan. The name of Chinese Tartary is no longer applicable. The Chinese have been massacred or expelled. The whole country has been revolutionized and Muhammedinized, and is under the sway of Yakúb Kushbegi, a native of Kokand, whose capital is Kashgár. This is the same individual who commanded the Army of Kokand against the Russians some fifteen years ago, and it is said to have been secretly favourable to them. Be that as it may, it is certain he now rules at Kashgár, and the Russians have advanced their frontier from Bakhtarminsk in the direction of Kashgár, 500 miles to the south, to the Syanshan Mountains, which bound Kashgár to the north, and have annexed all the territory to the west. Were the same rate of progress continued, Russia would in the course of a few years—I have

heard one great authority say in one year—advance to the Kuen Lun range and the frontiers of Kashmír, and, for my part, I do not see why such an event should be contemplated by us with any feeling of dissatisfaction. The Chinese Government of Eastern Turkestan was cruel and exacting, and that of the natives, when they succeeded to power, was no better—as witness the pyramids of heads set up in Kashgár in 1857, by Vali Khan Turia, on the summit of one of which he is said to have placed the head of the celebrated traveller, Adolphe Schlagentweit. If the Government, therefore, should pass into other hands, I can see no reason for regretting the change. As to the Indian frontier in this direction, although the discoveries of that enterprising officer, Mr. Forsyth, and others, have dispelled the illusion once entertained, even by the President of our Geographical Society, that it is fenced with such stupendous and impassable mountain ranges that the movements of the most formidable hostile power in the region beyond it might be viewed with complete indifference, I nevertheless consider that there is no ground for alarm. It is true Mr. Forsyth and others have shown that about seventy miles east of the Karakorum Pass there is a route over a high plateau passable even for wheeled carriages between the frontier of India and Yarkand. It is true, too, that the frontier of India has twice been invaded in that direction, once in 1686, and again in 1841; but the territory belongs to our faithful ally the Rajah of Kashmír, who sent a brigade to assist us at the siege of Delhi, and whose loyalty and fidelity are well known, and with our assistance he could render all attempts at invasion over the difficult country I have mentioned impossible, and therefore we need have no anxiety on that head. I must mention that Mr. Forsyth has succeeded, with the aid of the Rajah of Kashmír and his Minister, in developing a trade between the Panjáb and Yarkand in this direction, which cannot but prove most beneficial to our Indian tea plantations. On that account, and in the interest of science, I trust the Government will see reason to publish the correspondence and Papers which have passed between Mr. Forsyth and the Indian Government on this subject.

To return to the great tract to the West, which I have called Central Asia, and the boundaries of which I have mentioned. This is marked out by nature in three great divisions. To the north there is the Great Kirghiz Steppe, extending 1,500 miles from west to east, and more than 500 from north to south. This is, for the most part, desert, and wandered

over by 2,500,000 of Nomad Kirghiz. Next comes the rich tract between the rivers Jaxartes and Oxus, which extends from the Sea of Aral, in a south-easterly direction, some 800 miles, up to the mountains of Badakhshán and Kábul, and comprehends the three Uzbek States—Khaiva, Bokhára, and Kokand. Lastly, there is, to the south-west, the great Turkuman Steppe, with a population of 2,000,000 of Nomad Turkumans. The area of the whole region I am describing exceeds 1,000,000 of square miles, with a population of less than 9,000,000. Its area surpasses that of British India, and might even be compared with the whole of the vast tract from Pesháwar to Calcutta, and Cape Comorin. This scanty population is mainly owing to mis-government, for the country between the rivers possesses a soil of singular fertility, and is capable of supporting many times more inhabitants than it at present has. Indeed, the immense armies of Chengíz, and of Tamerlane, were maintained and recruited there.

Sir, twenty years ago the whole of this vast region was interposed as an independent country, inhabited by free and independent tribes, between Russia and Persia, and Afghánistan. The Russian frontier was then marked by the so-called Orenburg and Siberian Lines, a series of military posts which extended from Gouriev, where the river Ural falls into the north-west part of the Caspian, to Orenburg, Orsk, Troitska, Petropalovsky, Semipalatinsk, and Bakhtarminsk, a distance of 3,300 versts, or 2,200 miles. But in 1847-8 the Russians commenced a great movement to the south; they built three forts in the centre of the Kirghiz Steppe on the Turgai, Irgiz, and Karabut rivers, established lines of communication from Orenberg to the Sea of Aral through the Steppe, and built the Fort of Aralsk or Raimsk, where the Jaxartes flows into the Aral Sea, on which they launched three vessels. From that time to this their advance has been sometimes slow, but continuous. I will not weary the House by detailing their military operations, which were uniformly successful, and reflect much credit on the Russian soldiers. Suffice it to say, that the advance was made in two directions; from the Aral along the course of the Jaxartes, where a line of forts, erected by the Kokanians since 1817, were captured and destroyed, or re-built and garrisoned, and from the Siberian lines to effect a junction with the troops ascending the Jaxartes, and to capture the forts that intervened between the two Russian lines of advance. The progress of these two lines was delayed by two events, one of which was a serious insurrection of the Kirghiz of the

Steppe under one Izet Kutebar, which lasted from 1853 to 1857. I may mention that these tribes are now again in revolt, and have been joined by the Bashkirs. But the present insurrection will assuredly be put down, as was the last. However, in 1853, the Russians took Ak-Mesjid, the principal Kokanian fort on the Jaxartes, and, in 1854, they founded Fort Vernoe, on the Issikul Lake, on the eastern line of advance, which became the capital of the great Kirghiz horde, who must now be reckoned as Russian subjects. The other great event was the Crimean War; but, as soon as it was over, Russia made immense efforts to reduce Circassia to complete submission. An army of more than 100,000 men was employed in the Caucasus—Gaunib was taken in 1859, and Shamil sent prisoner to Russia. The Circassian exodus followed, and the great army of Trans-Caucasia was set free to reinforce the troops in Central Asia, or to act in any other direction.

In 1864, the two Russian lines of advance were brought into communication by the capture of Turkestan and Chemkend, two important cities above the forts on the Lower Jaxartes, and by the storming of all the Kokanian forts to the East. In November of that year, Prince Gortschakoff issued a circular, stating that Russia had been constrained by imperious necessity to advance thus far, but that the Empire had now reached its limits, which would be settled by negotiation. In 1865, the recently conquered territory was erected into a new Government, which was called the Province of Turkestan. But in the summer of that year hostilities were resumed; General Chernaief engaged and defeated the combined forces of Kokan and Bokhára, and advancing south ninety miles, took Tashkend, a city with 100,000 inhabitants, and the most important commercial town in Central Asia. He was recalled, but presented, it is said, with a diamond-hilted sword by the Emperor. His successor, General Romanoffsky, followed in his steps, and in May, 1866, defeated the Amír of Bokhára, at Idfar, on the left bank of the Jaxartes, marched south, and took Khojend, a city directly between Kokan and Bokhára. With this blow, the independence of Kokan, one of the three principal Uzbek States, was extinguished, half its territory being incorporated with Russia, and the other half reduced to a dependency under Khudayár Khán. In 1867, Romanoffsky invaded the territory of Bokhára, and established a *tete de pont* at Jizzik, within sixty miles of Samarkand. On this he was recalled, and even degraded

from his military rank and sent to Moscow, where he devoted his time to the preparation of a pamphlet, on the means of consolidating the Russian conquests in Central Asia. Meanwhile, General Kaufmann, in command of Jizzik, defeated an army of observation, which the Amír of Bokhára had assembled in the vicinity, and took Samarkand, which is now garrisoned in force by the Russians. Thus expired the independence of Bokhára, for the Russians can, at any time, occupy the capital and overrun the remaining territory; but, ere they do this, they will probably wait for the construction of a railway from the Caspian to the Oxus, which, at the recommendation of General Romanoffsky, has been sanctioned by the Russian Government, and the surveys for which are now being made. It is said that General Romanoffsky will shortly arrive to superintend the construction of this line, by which the troops in Bokhára can be re-inforced in a few weeks either from the Caucasus or from Astrakhan.

Russia being now dominant in Bokhára and Kokan, and the whole of the rich country between the Jaxartes and the Oxus having been virtually absorbed into the Russian Empire, it may be asked—What will be the results? The first result will, of course, be that, as the Orenburg and Siberian Lines are now useless, the whole of the Cossacks and other troops that guard them will be pushed forward some 1,200 miles to occupy a new frontier from Krasnovodsk Bay, or wherever else on the Caspian the railway may be commenced, to the Oxus, and along that river to the foot of the Kábul mountains, and so on to Fort Vernoe in the Kashgár mountains, and thence to Siberia. The army of Central Asia will also, no doubt, be greatly augmented, and the resources and revenue of the new country will be fully adequate to meet the increased expenditure. The railway from the Caspian to the Oxus will enable the Russians at any time to reinforce their army on the Oxus to any extent from Trans-Caucasia. This is expressly stated by General Romanoffsky in words which, with the permission of the House, I will now read. General Romanoffsky, after speaking of new roads, projected by the Russians, from the Caspian into Central Asia, says—

"Since the above was written, preparations for the construction of a railroad have begun on this route. After the completion of the line, which may be expected within two years at latest, communications by steam will have been established between St. Petersburg and Khojend, in the very heart of Turkestan. Another advantage of the projected roads is that they would put the Caucasus in direct communication with Turkestan. It being probable that we shall have to keep a large force in the Caucasus for many years to come, and that, on the other hand, there will be no lack of opportunities in Central Asia of achieving grand results with small detachments, the importance of providing a short cut

cannot be over-rated. At present, it takes two months to march a body of troops from the Volga to Turkestan; after the construction of the new road, a couple of weeks will suffice. In future, then, the Caucasian army will be regarded by our Generals as the reserve of the Turkestan force, and being always so strong that it can easily spare some battalions without injury to the service intrusted to it, its sphere of action will, in fact, extend to both countries alike."

The second result will be that the Russians will acquire a predominant influence at Kábul. Those who question this do not perhaps consider how intimately Bokhára and Kábul are connected, both geographically and politically. The districts of Balkh, Khulum, and Kunduz, which have been held by the Afgháns of Kábul for the last thirty years, belong properly to Bokhára; while Maimánah, Sir-i-Pul, and Andkoi are in dispute between the two States. These circumstances must lead either to a collision between the Russians and Afgháns, or to great concessions on the part of the latter. In either case, Kábul is sure to become dependent on its powerful neighbour. It must be remembered, too, that Bokhára has repeatedly, in the last quarter of a century, decided the fate of Kábul. Both Dost Muhammed, and Akbar his son, took refuge in Bokhára, and returned from it to reign at Kábul; and, in 1867, Abdu'r rahmán Khán, the grandson of Muhammed, who is married to a daughter of the Amír of Bokhára, expelled Sher Ali Khán, the present ruler of Kábul, from his capital, with the help of a Bokhárian auxiliary force. We may fairly argue, then, that in the hands of Russia Bokhára will play a more influential *rôle* at Kábul than it did in those of a comparatively weak native chief. Sir, I cannot but think, from the tone of at least one article which has appeared in the *Moscow Gazette*, that the Russians themselves anticipate such a result, otherwise they would hardly have informed us that the passes up to Kábul are practicable for siege guns, or have supposed that we should attach so much importance to their occupation of Bokhára as they seem to think we do, by anticipating that we would have recourse to diplomatic, or even military interference, to prevent their advance. Sir, I believe these notions are quite false; and I imagine I am expressing something of the general feeling here when I say that I rejoice that the odious tyranny of the Uzbek chiefs has been superseded by a Government which has already done so much to civilize an immense portion of Asia, and develop its natural resources, and which hospitably receives and protects travellers, instead of plundering and imprisoning, or, perhaps, murdering them. The whole region

of which I have spoken, as just occupied by the Russians, is rich in minerals, and large portions of it in agricultural and other produce, and, under a settled Government, we may expect to see the uprise of a flourishing commerce, which by enriching Russia must indirectly benefit us. With regard to Kábul, although I conceive it to be our duty to cultivate friendly relations with its ruler, as well as other neighbouring Princes, I can see no reasons which should induce us to embark in any fresh alliance with him; still less can I understand why we should be apprehensive of any danger from that quarter. As soon as the railway is completed to Pesháwar from Lahore—and I am glad to hear that two-thirds of the lines, as far as Rawul Pindee, are now being made—and as soon as the line from Hyderabad to Multán is finished, I should look upon Pesháwar as about the safest place in all India for us to encounter an enemy. Supposing, for the sake of argument, a hostile force to descend from Kábul to invade India, it would, as Sir Henry Lawrence remarked long ago, emerge from the Khyber Pass, necessarily in some disorder, in the face of a first-class fortress and a powerful army, with all the resources of India at their back.

It is quite within our own power to make Pesháwar absolutely secure against any force that, under any circumstances, could be brought against it. It stands to reason that, as this place is one of the two doors of India, and as there are salubrious hill stations within a convenient distance, as at Rawul Pindee, and Campbellpore, we should here mass our strongest European force, say 15,000 men, under the very best General the English army can produce, and that he should have unlimited powers to establish defences on the banks of the Indus, and to deal with the hill tribes in the neighbourhood. If we wish to solve an Afghán problem, let us begin with these tribes, who are amongst the most warlike of their nation, and if united could, it is said, bring into the field 100,000 fighting men. I am informed that a medal is about to be given for fifteen actions fought by our troops in fourteen years with these tribes; and it is notorious that, in the campaign of 1863 alone, we lost against them 900 officers and men, killed and wounded. Sir, I hope the Government will propose another medal for the General and the troops who shall maintain our North-western frontier for three years without a single engagement with these tribes. I have no doubt such a medal could be won, but not till after a judicious mixture of severity and conciliation, maintained for some time, had brought

these tribes over to our side. In order to effect this object we must select the very best General we have for the command of the frontier, and place under him a sufficient number of European troops. At present we have at Pesháwar and on the frontier a force of 25,000 native troops—the very flower of our native army—and it appears highly impolitic to have with them no more than 6,500 Europeans. There are, at a convenient distance from Pesháwar, the most salubrious hill stations in, perhaps, all India, and there I would mass a force of not less than 15,000 Europeans, drawing 2,000 from each of the Minor Presidencies—from such places as Madras, Hyderabad, and Punah, and the rest from such stations as Cawnpore in Bengal. Such a European force could at once crush any opposition on the frontier, and would make it absolutely secure, and, in case of any unforeseen emergency, a division of it could be moved by rail to any part of India.

I think, therefore, that it is entirely in our own power to make our frontier at Pesháwar secure, and I am against any fresh alliances with the Afgháns of Kábul. I know it has been said that the neutrality of the Afgháns during the great Mutiny was owing to the subsidy paid to Dost Muhammed; but I am convinced that it is to be attributed to the stern and decisive measures taken by our General and the political authorities at Pesháwar, rather than to any forbearance on the part of the Ruler of Kábul. In short, I am entirely opposed to any agreement to supply the Afgháns with money or with arms, because our motives in such a course would be certainly misinterpreted, and because, from the notorious fickleness of the Afgháns, such supplies would be just as probably used against us as for us. Besides, our unfortunate antecedent relations with the Afgháns have left on their minds a blood feud. Above all, such a measure, without conciliating the Afgháns, would indubitably give great umbrage to our old and natural ally, Persia.

Having mentioned Persia, I come to mention a third result, which must necessarily follow from the recent conquests of Russia, and that is a considerable amount of apprehension, and perhaps disturbance, amongst the Persians. I know that in one respect the Russian advance will be beneficial to Persia. The slave markets of the Uzbek capitals will be now closed, and thus one great inducement for the forays of the Turkumans will be removed. We may even hope that the Russians may be induced, in the cause of humanity, to enforce the liberation of the myriads of

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Persians who are now pining in slavery amongst the Uzbeks. I know, too, that the Sháh is too conscious of his dignity, as the representative of one of the oldest monarchies upon earth, and too confident in the loyalty of his people, to have any anxiety; and I suppose that his Government and our own would be as willing to accept, as the Russians would be willing to offer, assurances of the groundlessness of any apprehension of a fresh advance on their part. But still unreasonable panics prevail in the East; and I cannot but think that the advance on the East of the Caspian of a great Power, which has already deprived Persia of some of her fairest provinces on the West of that sea, will cause considerable alarm in the frontier provinces of Persia, and especially in Khurásán. The Persians will point to the island of Ashurádah, in the south-east corner of the Caspian, close to Astarábád, which was occupied by Russia so long back as 1841, and converted from a mere sandbank into a naval depôt and a station for war steamers. The Persians have long since been informed by one of their own European instructors, M. Ferrier, that a Russian expeditionary force might with ease, and almost without the knowledge of the Persian Government, be landed from Báku or Astrakhan, at Ashurádah, concentrated at Astarábád, and marched along the Perso-Turkman frontier all the way to Herat. Indeed, the Persians might allege that such a step could not be prevented, for by the Treaty of Paris the Persians are prohibited from entering Herat territory, and it would take many weeks for a force from Kábul to reach Herat by the circuitous route of Ghazni and Kandahar. The Persians will also point to the fact that there is an Afghán contingent serving in the Russian camp, commanded, it is said, by Sikandar Khan, son of the late Ruler of Herat. Above all, they will dwell on the circumstance that the immense strategic importance and general value of Herat is thoroughly well known among the Russians, who had a scientific mission there in 1858, which explored all the neighbouring country. In fact, every Russian officer must know that Herat possesses a soil of unrivalled fertility, a salubrious climate, and abundance of water; that all the roads from the principal cities to the north, west, and south centre in it; that it is surrounded by formidable earthworks, which might be strengthened by European science to any extent. In short, Russian officers know well that Herat is a position of the highest strategic importance, and possesses unrivalled advantages in other respects. The Persians, therefore, will imagine that, just as three Russian

Generals in succession disregarded the manifesto of Prince Gortschakoff, and advanced to fresh conquests, so a fourth, in imitation of his predecessors, may be found to make a sudden and unexpected advance upon Herat. Now, it will be said that these apprehensions of the Persians are quite groundless, and the whole notion of a fresh movement on the part of Russia illusory, and many, therefore, will recommend a policy of complete inaction, and, no doubt, that was our true policy thirty years ago. But I contend that a system of interference on our part, as regards Herat, ever since 1837—wars waged, and millions of money expended, and, above all, Treaty obligations incurred—render an inactive policy now inconsistent with justice to Persia and with honour.

Sir, the House will, I hope, pardon me if I show, by a very brief *resumé* of our relations with Persia, the manner in which the Herat question arose, and the grounds on which I believe our former interference in it, and our present neglect of it, alike unjustifiable. It is, perhaps, not generally known that our friendly relations with Persia are of older date than those with Turkey, which commenced in 1675, while those with Persia began in 1602. In that year two valiant English Knights—Sir Anthony and Sir Robert Sherley—entered the service of Abbás the Great, and became the instructors of the Persian Army. It was in great part owing to them that he gained that signal victory over the Turks, in which 23,000 Turks were left dead on the field of battle, and ten Pashas were slain or taken prisoners. In 1622, friendly Embassies were interchanged between England and Persia. In 1625, the combined forces of Persia and of the East India Company took Gombroon, which has ever since been called the Port of Abbás. An English factory was maintained there till 1761, and during all that time the agents of the East India Company were well received at the Persian Court. The successors of Abbás, whatever their follies, or whatever their crimes, were uniformly favourable to Christians, and especially to the English, and their conduct in that respect contrasted most advantageously with the cruelty and intolerance of the Turks. Even Nádir, that great conqueror so terrible to others, showed especial favour to Englishmen; treated Hanway with respect, and made Elton his Admiral in the Caspian. In 1763, Karím Khán, then Sovereign of Persia, granted to the English exclusive trade privileges and the right of establishing a factory at Bushire. Those privileges

were enlarged and confirmed, in 1788, by Jáfir Khán. From 1801 to 1814, under the dread of an Afghán or a French invasion of India, the English sought the alliance of Persia with extraordinary persistence, and Fath Ali Sháh responded to their advances with the utmost cordiality, and thereby established, in behalf of Persia, an enduring claim on the friendship of England. In the repeated Treaties which were contracted during that period between the two countries, it was especially covenanted that Persia should prevent any invasion of India by the Afgháns, or by a European Power advancing by Samarkand or Bokhára. But as the dread of invasion passed away, the friendship of England grew cold. I shall not allude to what took place between us and Abbás Mirza in 1826 and 1828, because I am quite unable to justify it. It is enough that our policy towards Persia underwent a complete change, until, in the beginning of Muhammed Sháh's reign, our alienation culminated in positive interference and repression. Then arose, and was officially expressed, the idea—the preposterous idea, I will call it—that Persia was the "pioneer of Russia." That notion received some colour from the fact that Haji Mirza Aghassí, born a subject of Russia, had risen to be Prime Minister of Persia. But it is absurd to suppose that so astute a people as the Persians could have ever believed in any special identity between their own interests and those of Russia. I will not pursue this theme, but will only say that Russia is her own pioneer, and stands in need of no assistance from any quarter to accomplish her objects.

However, at this time the Herat question arose, and the erroneous doctrine I have mentioned prevented our diplomatic officers from giving to the arguments of the Persians, in favour of the expedition against Herat, their due weight.

I believe the value of Herat to Persia has never been properly understood in England. In order to view the question aright, it must be observed that the mountains, which form an impassable barrier to the North of Khurásán, after running several hundred miles from the Caspian in the direction of Herat, sink down before they reach that city, and leave a level country quite open to the forays of marauders. The Turkumans, who have desolated Persia for centuries, and have carried hundreds of thousands of Persians into slavery, cannot be repressed by Persia without the occupation of Merv, and Merv cannot be retained without the possession of Herat, as from no other place is there between Persia and Merv a

well watered and practicable route. Merv is a colony of the family of the Sháh, and is, in consequence, called "Merv of the Kajars." It was for these reasons, and not out of a foolish ambition, that Fath Ali Sháh, Abbás Mirza, his son, Muhammed Sháh, and his grandson, the reigning Sháh, have desired and attempted to occupy Herat. But there were other and just grounds for Muhammed Sháh's expedition. The House will be surprised to hear it, perhaps; but it is the fact, that the population of Herat is more Persian than Afghán. I will go further than that—I will prove to the House that the Afgháns are in a small minority; that they are mere invaders, and are as odious and detested as any invaders ever were in any part of the world. I establish this by the impartial testimony of a celebrated traveller and Orientalist, who has been the last European visitor at Herat, M. Vambery. He says—

"Never was ruler or conqueror so detested as is the Afghán by the Heratí. The original inhabitants of the city were Persians, and belonged to the race that spread itself from Sístán towards the North-east. The fortress itself is inhabited, for the most part, by Persians. As for Afgháns, one cannot find in the city more than 1 in 5. They have become quite Persians, and are, particularly since the last siege, very hostile to their own countrymen. A Kábulí is as much detested by them as by the aboriginal natives of Herat. It needs only some attack, no matter by whom, to be made upon Herat, for the Heratís to take up arms against the Afghans."—[*Travels in Central Asia*, p. 283.]

I was employed in the neighbourhood of Herat during the last siege, and I was in daily communication with Heratís, and I confirm that statement. But even our own political officer at Kábul acknowledged that Muhammed Sháh was justified in marching on Herat. Burnes wrote from Kábul to Lord Auckland, on the 14th of October, 1837—

"The most outrageous conduct of Kamran and his Minister in having sold into slavery the greater part, if not the whole Shiah population of Herat, would justify any attack on the part of Persia."

But Burnes did not add that, by the 9th Article of the Treaty of 1814, England was expressly debarred from interfering. The Article is—

"If war should be declared between the Afgháns and Persians, the English Government shall not interfere with either party, unless their mediation to effect a peace shall be solicited by both parties."

But in spite of this express covenant—in spite of the most just grounds and even necessity that Persia had to occupy Herat—England interfered, and in favour of whom? —of a man who had sold a whole population into slavery, and who requited us by immediately tendering his allegiance to Persia. Sir, it would occupy too much time to continue the story of Herat. Suffice it to say that it is all of the

same kind, and has resulted in great expense to ourselves, and in great loss and expense to Persia, counterbalanced, in some degree, to Persia by the fact that even the Afghán chiefs that we have imposed upon the Heratís, have all been, avowedly or secretly, the vassals of the Sháh, and have some of them even read the prayer for the Sovereign, and coined money in his, the Sháh's, name.

Sir, I contend, that, as our policy of repression and interference with Persia has entirely broken down in the case of Herat, we should abandon it as regards Merv, Sístán, Bahrain, and other places, where we have no legitimate right to meddle. I would also urge that we should again recognize the fact that the interests of Persia are entirely identical with our own; and that we should return to the former cordial alliance with that country which we maintained for many years. As for Herat, we are, of course, bound to observe the Treaty of Paris, but let us at least interpret it as favourably as possible to Persia; and to that end let us send a British officer of experience to Herat, who may act as mediator for the Persian interests. There can be no objection to this, as our name has always stood well with the Heratís, and there have been many European officers at Herat since the time of Eldred Pottinger. Colonel Taylor, and Captain Clerk, were there in 1857; the Russian Mission in 1858; Colonel Pelly in 1860; and Dost Muhammed himself invited me to Herat during the siege of 1862-3. In every other respect let us assist to strengthen Persia. I understand that there is an intention of sending officers to instruct the Sháh's battalions, in accordance with the application which I had the honour to submit from his Majesty, in 1863; but I must own I am surprised at the delay which has taken place in acceding to so reasonable a request. There is no better soldier than the Persian, and under English officers—to whom he has always been respectful and attached—he would be equal to any undertaking. If the House will permit me I will establish this by undoubted evidence. The first evidence I will quote is that of one who saw the Persian soldier in action, and whose testimony cannot be disputed—I mean Eldred Pottinger. He says—

"Muhammed Sháh's troops were infinitely better soldiers than ours (the Sepoys), and twice as good troops as the Afgháns. The non-success of their efforts was the fault of their Generals. The men worked very well at the trenches, considering they were not trained Sappers, and the practice of their artillery was really superb. They simply wanted Engineers and a General to have proved a most formidable force. It is my firm belief that Muhammed Sháh might have carried the city by assault the very first day that he reached Herat."—[*Kaye's Lives of Indian Officers*, Vol. 2, p. 182.]

The second authority is Sir Justin Sheil, who writes—

"The Persian soldier is active, energetic, and robust, with immense power of enduring fatigue, privation, and exposure. He is full of intelligence, and seems to have a natural aptitude for a military life. Half clothed, half fed, and not even half-paid, he will make marches of twenty-four miles day after day, and when needs be he will extend them to forty miles. He bears cold and heat with equal fortitude.....is full of life and cheerfulness, and has always displayed the most complete submission to his English commanders, for whom he has ever had a special veneration. In the last contest between Persia and Turkey 3,000 or 4,000 Persians of the regular army put to flight 30,000 or 40,000 Turks at Toprah Kalah, between Baizíd and Erzerúm."—[*Sheil's Persia*, p. 382.]

Having indicated the desirableness of a change of policy as regards Persia, and of non-interference with her territorial claims, I must make one exception, and that is as regards the dominions of our faithful ally, the Khan of Kelát. Sir, it is now thirty years since we acknowledged the independence of Kelát, and entered into an alliance with its ruler as with an independent Prince. I may say that I drew the first Memorandum for the first Treaty myself. Ever since then the Khans of Kelát have been our faithful allies, and I think their country may fairly be regarded as an integral part of India. Indian names of places still remain in it. The Hindus go in multitudes on pilgrimage to Hingláj, which is within its limits. We have a special interest in protecting Kelát, as it forms the frontier of Sindh, and we have already some small military posts in it, as well as our telegraphic stations. I think, therefore, that we ought to interpose our good offices to put an end to the war which is now carried on between the Persians and Kelatís along their frontier. In order to remove all ground for quarrel a Boundary Commission should be appointed under our mediation, which would settle the line of demarcation once and for ever, all the way from the Makran coast to Quettah. Should it be acceptable to the Khan of Kelát, I would also move up all the Sindh horse, except half a regiment, to Quettah, and even locate with them the European regiment now at Karáchí. This is a measure recommended by that great military genius, General Jacob, and by many other authorities. The climate of Quettah is infinitely preferable to that of Sindh for Europeans, and by the move we should have the control of the Bolan and Khojuk passes. The Bolan might be made absolutely secure by the yearly expenditure of half the sum we paid as subsidy to Dost Muhammed.

The only objection I have heard to this step is that it would give umbrage to the Afgháns. But why should the Afgháns, who submit so quietly to our appropriation of a large

part of what is really Afghán territory—I mean Pesháwar—take umbrage at our fixing an additional post in a country which is entirely independent of them! The truth is, the objection is worse than ridiculous—it is false. The Afgháns do not object, and Saiyid Nur Muhammed, the present Prime Minister of Kábul, when he resided for some months at Quettah, used, while deprecating our so much as sending a single officer to Kábul, to recommend our occupation of Quettah.

With a change of policy towards Persia, I would urge, as a first step, the transference of the superintendence of our relations with that country from the Foreign to the India Office. At present there is a conflict of authority, the officers in one part of Persia being under one Department, and in another part under another. This is extremely detrimental to the public interests, and productive of delays and embarrassments. Then, without in the least depreciating the great merit and ability of the officials at the Foreign Office, I must say that they cannot possibly know so much of Persian affairs as men like Sir Henry Rawlinson, Sir Bartle Frere, Lord Lawrence, and others, who are, or have been, Members of the Council of India. Indian officers, too, are more fitted for employment in Persia than the regular diplomatic *attachés*, who pine for Paris and Vienna, and are only anxious to get away from Teherán as soon as possible. It is mainly with regard to Indian interests that our Legation at Teherán is so important. Indian trade with the Persian Gulf alone amounts to £5,000,000, and it is on that account that India defrays the greater part of the expenses of the Legation, and would, no doubt, willingly defray all. Therefore, as the India Office pays for the Legation, it ought to have the control of affairs. The Electric Telegraph, with all the officers attached to it, is now under the India Office; and if it be true, as I hope may be the case, that there is a prospect that English officers will be again sent to Persia to instruct the Sháh's army, they would most probably be under the India Office.

Sir, I will not trespass on the time of the House any longer, but will conclude by moving for—

"A Note on Sístán by the officiating Under Secretary at Fort William, dated 20th December, 1867; Despatches and Memoranda, or extracts from Despatches or Memoranda, which have been sent to the Government of India since 1866 by Mr. Forsyth, or other officers on the frontier, as to the Trade of India with Eastern Turkestán, or the countries between it and the Panjáb."

LONDON: CORNELIUS BUCK, 23, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

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Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018